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Computer initiative brings students, parents together

Training program offered at 12 schools

By Megan Tench, Globe Staff | June 6, 2004

For more than 450 of Boston's low-income families, yesterday's graduation ceremony at the Wentworth Institute of Technology marked a brand new beginning.

After spending 10 weeks together in intense computer training, mothers and fathers crossed the stage alongside their children. Not only were they handed certificate of completion signed by Boston Mayor Thomas M. Menino, but the families left the Technology Goes Home program with even more: A new computer and, for some, a fresh start.

"It's been a great experience," said Lourdes DaSilva, a Dorchester parent who took the classes with her daughter Jordan, 9, at the Nathan Hale Elementary School. "It was refreshing to spend more time with her."

To help strengthen community and family ties, the computer classes are offered in groups, with parents and children learning together. Roxbury resident Charlotte Lambright, who says she barely ever touched a keyboard in the past, completed the program with her daughter Corine, a student from East Boston High School. Yesterday, they walked across the stage together.

Like many people enrolled in Technology Goes Home, Lambright found the program a source of inspiration. After completing the program last summer, she enrolled in another 16-week computer job training program and a 3-week financial training program, and eventually landed herself a new job at the Central Artery.

Transforming lives is what Technology Goes Home is all about, said Edward DeMore, CEO of the Boston Digital Bridge Foundation and founder of the training program.

"For a lot of families, they don't see a lot hope," he said while shaking hands with graduates after the ceremony.

"Our goals are to enhance the employment opportunities of the adults and the academic achievement of the students," DeMore said. "Our hope is that this program, over time, changes the city."

While 25 percent of the graduates report going on to better jobs, more than 80 percent say they've developed a closer relationship with their children's schools and see higher grades, DeMore said.

That was the case for Dorchester mother Coritta Teri Boyd, and her son Dominick. Dominick, who is hearing impaired, attends the Horace Mann School for the Deaf in Allston.

"This was really good for him," she said, adding that now Dominick, 11, has his own computer to use for schoolwork or to design posters -- one of his favorite pastimes.

"I loved it," added Dominick, using sign language. "I got so much practice on the computer."

Boyd has been asked by her son's teachers to join the school's Management Board because she is so much more involved with the school.

So far, the program, which is offered in 12 Boston public schools and by a number of neighborhood groups, has graduated more than 1,300 families. Graduates receive top-of-the-line computers and printers at discounted rates.

"This program is my favorite program," Menino said, addressing the crowd of families. "It helps families work together, it helps in the job search and improves job skills. I've seen so many examples where, through technology, people really improve their lives."



Coritta Boyd of Dorchester, with her 11-year-old son, Dominick, at the Technology Goes Home graduation ceremony in the Wentworth Institute of Technology.